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Discovery Missions: Unique Approaches to Education and Public Outreach

Shari Asplund (JPL)

NASA's Discovery Program is comprised of a series of low-cost, highly focused, competitively selected planetary science investigations. Discovery missions aim to enhance our understanding of the solar system by exploring the planets, their moons, and other small bodies using innovative approaches to assure the highest science value for the cost. Discovery, which began in 1992, is a breakthrough in the way space exploration is conducted. It represents the successful implementation of NASA Administrator Daniel Goldin's vision of "Faster, Better, Cheaper" planetary missions.

Discovery was among the first NASA programs to require that an education and public outreach plan be part of every investigation. One of Discovery's supporting objectives is to increase public awareness of, and appreciation for, solar system exploration through exciting education and public outreach (E/PO) activities. Each mission is expected to spend 1 to 2% of its total budget on E/PO. The Office of Space Science, which funds Discovery missions, strongly encourages space science researchers to engage actively in education and public outreach as an important component of their NASA-supported professional activities.

Each of the eight Discovery missions selected to date has developed a unique approach to formal and informal education and outreach to the public. Our posters will highlight some of the notable E/PO activities that have been conducted and are being planned by the six current Discovery missions—NEAR, Stardust, Genesis, CONTOUR, MESSENGER and Deep Impact.

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